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ABQ Ride to Revamp Route
By Lloyd Jojola
Journal Staff Writer

ABQ Ride plans on revamping its Route 162 Ventana Ranch Commuter bus service, which city officials say will increase the frequency of buses and better serve riders to Volcano Vista High School and Central New Mexico Community College's West Side campus.

This marks the first time the city has routed a bus specifically to accommodate APS and its growth, Mayor Martin Chávez said Wednesday.

"We expect when Volcano Vista High School opens that they'll be expecting 1,100 students this fall, growing to 1,800 by the year 2009," Chávez said. "We know that CNM West Side has more than 3,000 students enrolled."

The proposed route would drop off Volcano Vista students within one-third of a mile from the school at 8100 Rainbow NW. With the current route, the closest stop to the school is more than a mile away. As area roads are built, the city will review the route to make the bus stop closer to the school.

The Route 162 service, as it exists, is the fourth-least used route in the transit system, spokesman Art Martinez said. Changes to the route would go into effect in August.

The new route would be shorter, with its starting point at Coors and Montañito Plaza instead of Central and Unser. Essentially, the new route would run between the Coors/Montañito area and CNM West Side campus at 10549 Universe NW using Coors, La Orilla, Taylor Ranch, Montañito, Unser, Universe, Woodmont, Rainbow and Irving.

The new starting point would allow one bus, instead of two, to make 12 round trips a day, according to ABQ Ride. The service frequency would increase from 2 1/2 trips in the morning and evening to five in the morning and seven in the evening. The city said the operating cost would remain the same.

The new starting point would provide connections to the Route 790 Rapid Ride Blue Line, Route 155 Coors, Route 157 Montañito-Uptown, Route 94 Unser Express, Route 96 Crosstown Commuter and Route 92 Taylor Ranch services.

"The route needed more high-volume connections to get people across town," ABQ Ride Director Greg Payne said. While the southern leg of the existing route would be eliminated, transit officials maintain riders along that portion would still be served by the Route 766 Rapid Ride Red Line, Route 66 Central, Route 92 Taylor Ranch Express and Route 94 Unser Express buses.

Chávez said the new route structure also will benefit a number of area businesses and other locations. The new route would serve places such as TriCore Labs, Montecito Estates, Petroglyph National Monument, The Shoppes at Taylor Ranch, Taylor Ranch Community Center, First Baptist Church of West Albuquerque, Sagebrush Community Church and Riverside Church of Christ.

Possible changes

The Route 162 Ventana Ranch Commuter bus service.

The existing route includes:

Five round-trips per day using two buses.

A 13.7-mile, 75-minute round-trip.

Five bus connections.

The Volcano Vista High School stop is more than a mile away from the school.

The proposed route includes:

The schedule would be extended.

Twelve round-trips per-day using one bus.

An 8.5-mile, 45-minute round-trip.

Six bus connections.

The Volcano Vista High School stop is within one-third of a mile away from the school.

-- Source: ABQ Ride